

## ‘Some Other Kind of Lore’: Satire and Self-Governance in Spenserian Poetry.

This article investigates William Browne’s use of a poem by the medieval poet Thomas Hoccleve as a tribute to his imprisoned fellow-poet George Wither. It argues that Hoccleve’s self-referential poem-sequence *The Series* plays a wider role in Browne’s poem, and Wither’s responses to it, than has been realised. Recent scholarship has emphasised the unity of these “Spenserian” poets, and explored their innovative uses of the pastoral genre to express public, political concerns. But Browne’s Hoccleve quotation reveals the important role that satire, and its traditional interests in self-governance, played in their work, strengthening recent arguments for these poems’ influence on Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*. The Spenserians used dialogic forms not simply to demonstrate consensus but to explore their differences, and rather than the poetic and political alliance that has been assumed, Browne’s ambiguous tribute to Wither may have created a lasting rift. But it also had a more productive legacy in shaping Wither’s turn to the psalms. Browne’s Hocclevean eclogue helps to uncover the political roots of this project, and of the wider prophetic identity that Wither came to assume.

*The Shepherds Pipe* (1614) opens with an encounter between two live poets and a dead one: William Browne, George Wither and Thomas Hoccleve. Hoccleve, the Lancastrian civil servant who claimed to be Chaucer’s literary heir, is the silent partner in this relationship. Discussions of this collection of pastoral dialogues by Browne, Wither and their “Spenserian” poetic associates have paid Hoccleve relatively little attention.<sup>1</sup> Yet *The Shepherds Pipe* is dominated by Browne’s opening eclogue, which is almost entirely comprised of a transcription of Hoccleve’s poem ‘Jonathas’ (c. 1420), presented as an inset “song” performed by Wither at Browne’s request.

Browne’s use of Hoccleve has been viewed as a proto-nationalistic gesture, part of the wider Spenserian project to build a ‘kingdom of our own language’ identified in Richard Helgerson’s *Forms of Nationhood*.<sup>2</sup> But Wither, who in 1621 was to criticise one of the weaker passages in his own earlier poetry as a ‘foolish Canterbury Tale’, and later attacked poets who ‘keep the fashion / Of elder times’, seems unlikely to have shared this goal. Browne’s turn to ‘Jonathas’ was a less predictable move than scholars have assumed, and one whose implications challenge the currently-accepted view of the Spenserians as a ‘homogeneous literary community . . . constituted by the equality of friendship’.<sup>3</sup>

The ‘Jonathas’ eclogue provoked multiple responses from Wither, and one by another of the *Shepherds Pipe* poets, John Davies of Hereford. Satire, a genre whose importance to the Spenserians has sometimes been obscured by their pastoral stylings, is central to these exchanges. Both before and after his relatively brief association with Browne and the other *Shepherds Pipe* contributors, Wither was a satirist; and it is Roman satire rather than British nationalism, I will suggest, that furnishes the principal motivations behind Browne’s use of Hoccleve. As a result, the tensions that radiate from this poem have much to tell us about the nature of early modern satire, and the depth of Wither’s engagement with it. Recent scholarship has focussed on satire’s ‘occasional and tactical deployments’ on the ideological battlefield of early Stuart politics.<sup>4</sup> But this is also a genre that frames its targets as failures of self-governance, and gains complexity by exploring this as an issue for the satirist as much as his opponents. Examining this central concern in Wither’s poetry – a concern Browne’s ‘Jonathas’ eclogue directly and riskily addresses

---

<sup>1</sup> David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, rev. edn (Oxford, 2002), 187; Michelle O’Callaghan, *The ‘Shepherds Nation’: Jacobean Spenserians and Early Stuart Political Culture, 1612-1625* (Oxford, 2000), 54, 61. Joan Grundy does not mention Hoccleve at all: *The Spenserian Poets: a Study in Elizabethan and Jacobean Poetry* (London, 1969). On Hoccleve and Chaucer, see John M. Bowers, ‘Thomas Hoccleve and the Politics of Tradition’, *The Chaucer Review* 36 (2002), 352-69, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> O’Callaghan, *Shepherds Nation*, 61; Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago, 1991), 1-18. Although this essay disagrees with some of her conclusions, like everyone working on this topic I’m indebted to O’Callaghan’s research.

<sup>3</sup> George Wither, *Wither’s Motto* (1621), A3<sup>v</sup>; Wither, *Britain’s Remembrancer* (1628), 137<sup>r</sup>; O’Callaghan, *Shepherds Nation*, 34, 40.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew McRae, *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State* (Cambridge, 2004), 9.

– reveals a figure who differs in important respects from the biblical republican and ‘citizen prophet’ whom recent studies have located.<sup>5</sup> Wither’s investment in satire shows him to have been a poet of psychological as well as political insurrection, whose work points not just to the English revolution but to *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

#### WITHER AND ‘JONATHAS’

*The Shepherds Pipe* contains seven eclogues by Browne, followed by others by Wither, John Davies of Hereford and Christopher Brooke, in a style modelled on Spenser’s *Shepherds’ Calendar*. The poems depict their authors conversing with the other contributors, using pastoral alter egos such as Willy (Browne) and Roget (Wither). The opening eclogue, which is almost twice as long as any of the others, contains Browne’s ‘Jonathas’ transcription. In its original context, ‘Jonathas’ closes Hoccleve’s five-poem sequence *The Series*. Browne transfers it to a pastoral setting, framing it with opening and closing dialogues between Willy/Browne and Roget/Wither. At the time of publication Wither had been imprisoned for supposedly libellous passages in his popular satire *Abuse Stript, and Whipt* (1613).<sup>6</sup> Browne depicts ‘Jonathas’ as sung by a dejected Roget in response to Willy’s persuasions. Afterwards Roget explains that ‘Jonathas’ was written by a student of ‘Tityrus’, Spenser’s pseudonym for Chaucer. In an unusual endnote Browne clarifies that this means ‘Thomas Occleeve . . . he wrote in Chaucer’s time’, notes that none of Hoccleve’s work has previously been printed – Browne seems unaware that *The Letter of Cupid* was included in editions of Chaucer – and claims also to possess ‘the rest of his workes, being all perfect in my hands’. In this way, as Michelle O’Callaghan implies, the eclogue appears to mobilise English poetic tradition in a gesture of nationalist solidarity with the imprisoned Wither.<sup>7</sup>

But although Browne’s poem invokes tradition, it also asks for change. It opens with Roget responding to his poems’ hostile reception by refusing to sing at all. He complains that people misinterpret his works as personal attacks, regardless of what he actually writes. Willy consoles him that such hypersensitive readers obviously have something to feel guilty about: ‘Rub a gal’d horse on the gall, / Kicke he wil . . .’ (B2). These were standard defences used by early modern satirists.<sup>8</sup> But Willy proceeds to offer a different solution:

Yet if such thou wilt not sing,  
Make the Woods and Vallies ring  
With some other kind of lore,  
Roget hath enough in store,  
Sing of love, or tell some tale (B3<sup>r</sup>).

This implies that Roget could, in fact, do more to place his poetry beyond suspicion, by changing how he writes; and it is in response to this request that Roget sings ‘Jonathas’.

<sup>5</sup> O’Callaghan, *Shepherds Nation*, 152; David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge, 1999), 239.

<sup>6</sup> O’Callaghan, *Shepherds Nation*, 26-30, 169-74; Allan Pritchard, ‘Abuses Stript and Whipt and Wither’s Imprisonment’, *Review of English Studies*, NS 14 (1963), 337-45.

<sup>7</sup> William Browne, *The Shepherds Pipe* (1614), C5<sup>v</sup>-C6<sup>r</sup>; Spenser, *The Shepherdes Calender* (1579), ¶.ii.<sup>r</sup>; Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler, eds, *Poems of Cupid, God of Love* (Leiden, 1990), 172; O’Callaghan, *Shepherds Nation*, 61.

<sup>8</sup> Angela Wheeler, *English Verse Satire from Donne to Dryden: Imitation of Classical Models* (Heidelberg, 1992), 84; galled horses (or camels) express this in, e. g., Nicholas Breton, *Pasquils Mad-Cap* (1600), A2<sup>r</sup>; Breton, *Pasquils Mistresse* (1600), G<sup>v</sup>; Joseph Hall, *Virgidemiarum Sixe Bookes: First Three Bookes* (1597), 68; John Marston, *The Scourge of Villanie*, 2nd edn (1599), A4<sup>v</sup>-B1<sup>r</sup>; John Davies of Hereford, *The Scourge of Follie* (1611), A7<sup>v</sup>; Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, ‘After the Second Sounding’, l. 133, in Ben Jonson, *The Complete Plays*, ed. G. A. Wilkes, 4 vols (Oxford, 1981–), vol. 1. Further citations of plays by Jonson will be to this edition.

That this advice is addressed to Wither lends it particular significance. Holding one's course, remaining 'myself', 'unchanged', 'the same', devotion to 'constancy' in the teeth of opposition; these sentiments were to become Wither's trademarks, and they were already fully-fledged in *Abuses Stript, and Whipt*, the only major work that Wither had published at the time Browne was writing. As the verse 'Introduction' to these sprawling verse satires observes, 'the course I have begunne, / In spight of them I wil (God helping) runne'. The 'abuses' of the title were those generated by humankind's general failure to achieve this. Wither's target was man's 'wavering mind / . . . this same divers and inconstant creature, / . . . 'Tis his abuses . . . / I labour to discover'.<sup>9</sup>

Wither's ideals of constancy, moreover, were linked distinctively to his published texts. The preface to *Abuses* begins with an eccentric dedication: "To him-selfe . . . Thou (even my selfe) . . . I have made choise of thy Patronage for this booke' (A4). This sounds like self-praise, but the words that follow reverse this impression, showing the apparent bombast to be premised on its author's awareness of his own fragility. Wither wanted the fixity of print publication to anchor his potentially wayward mind:

I have made this Dedication to thee, poore world-despised Selfe; even to put thee in minde . . . that thou take heed to thine owne words . . . If ever adversitie (as tis like enough) oppresse thee, yet remember thy owne sayings . . . Reade it, weekly, daily, yea and howlerly toe: what though it bee thine owne? thou knowest mans nature to bee so uncertaine, and prone to forgetfulnesse . . . thou canst not have too many Memorandums. . . thou hast seene many by an alteration in their estate beene so metamorphosed, as if they were not the same men . . . let this thy owne worke bee first confirmed by thy life and conversation, yea let it be a President to thy selfe . . . (A4<sup>v</sup>-A7<sup>v</sup>).

This idea was important to Wither. He returned to it in *Wither's Motto* (1621), which aimed 'by recording those thoughts to confirme mine owne Resolution . . . neither Feare, nor Force shall compell me, to deny any thing which I have affirmed in this Poem' (138); and his major work, *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628), is partly intended as a similar ethical 'memorandum' for the nation as a whole (167-68). Yet the eye-catching statement of intent on *Abuses*' opening pages jars against Willy's advice to Roget. In *Abuses* Wither was publically committing himself to remain true to his work, regardless of circumstances. Now those circumstances had changed with his imprisonment, and his commitment was being tested. Browne's suggestion could be seen as an invitation to abandon it at the first hurdle.

Further difficulties emerge with the nature of 'Jonathas', the poem which exemplifies Browne's suggested change. Hoccleve had himself adapted this from the *Gesta romanorum*, a medieval collection of fables with concluding 'moralisations' that spell out their religious significance.<sup>10</sup> Hoccleve's version of 'Jonathas' also ends with a moralisation of this kind (ll. 673-732), though Browne omits this section from his eclogue. But at the start of *Abuses*, following his promise to remain true to his text, Wither states his determination to avoid 'fained Allegories', 'dark riddles' and 'darke Parables':

I neither feare nor shame to speake the Truth, and therefore have nakedly thrust it forth without a covering. . . my desire is to be so plaine, that the bluntest Jobernole might understand mee . . . as plaine (as they say) as a pack-saddle (B1<sup>v</sup>-B2<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>9</sup> George Wither, *Abuses Stript, and Whipt* (1613), C4<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>v</sup>; for further examples, see *The Shepherds Hunting* (1615), B4<sup>v</sup>, E2<sup>v</sup>; *Faire-Virtue* (1622), A8<sup>r</sup>, D2<sup>r</sup>, K6<sup>v</sup>, N7<sup>r</sup>; *Wither's Motto*, C6<sup>r</sup>; *The Schollers Purgatory* (1624), 86; *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635), 2, 24, 143, 218, 228. The latter even manages the unusual feat of making the moon a symbol of constancy (24).

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Hoccleve, *My Complaite and Other Poems*, ed. Roger Ellis (Exeter, 2001), 191. All citations from *The Series* will be from this edition, by line-number. For convenience I use the standard English titles 'Jereslaus's Wife', 'Lerne to Dye', and 'Jonathas' for the last three poems in *The Series*, rather than Ellis's Latin ones.

The point was not clear-cut, since much later in this work Wither confusingly launches into a Sidneian defence of poetic ‘parable[s]’ as ‘precious Truths within . . . fables wrapt’ (Q7<sup>r-v</sup>). But despite this theoretical endorsement, such fables are notably absent from *Abuses*, which stays gruellingly true to the stylistic philosophy that its preface announces. And ‘Jonathas’ is not only a parable, but one whose comprehensibility is darkened, in its *Shepherds Pipe* context, by the removal of the moralisation that explains it. It seems directly to contradict the policy that the opening of *Abuses* sets out.

Browne probably left the moralisation out in order to avoid its confessional implications, but these make ‘Jonathas’ an even odder choice. David Norbrook has noted John Bale’s approval of Hoccleve’s attacks on the clergy in the *Regiment of Princes* (c. 1411), though these must be balanced against the same work’s extended denunciation of Lollard ‘heresie’.<sup>11</sup> But as Susan Wabuda has shown, early reformers like Bale had no time for the *Gesta romanorum*, whose principal use prior to the reformation was to provide material for sermons. In 1541 the reformist bishop John Scory condemned ‘preachers [who] brought in their sermons Gesta Romanorum, persuading the people that it was the gospel or the Bible’; Robert Wisdom similarly rejected ‘gestes romanorum, legenda aurea, nor suche other lyes’, and Bale’s *Yet a Course at the Romyshe Foxe* (1543) mocked Bonner’s approval of the *Gesta* among ‘auncyent workes allowed of holye churche . . . bokes of catholyk lernynge’.<sup>12</sup> This disapproval lingered sufficiently for the editor of the only post-reformation edition of the *Gesta*, John Robinson, to point out how he had ‘reformed’ his text’s ‘indecent application[s]’ to avoid ‘scruple and blemish of suspition’. These disclaimers may have been disingenuous, however, since he dedicated his work to the openly Catholic Countess of Lennox, Mary Queen of Scots’s aunt.<sup>13</sup>

‘Jonathas’ does not appear in Robinson’s selection, and though the lines which introduce it in Hoccleve’s *Series* make it clear that it comes from the *Gesta*, this is not stated explicitly.<sup>14</sup> But it seems unlikely that Browne, whose Hoccleve collection formed part of a wider antiquarian interest in middle English poetry,<sup>15</sup> could have been unaware either of the ultimate source of the poem that he chose to transcribe, or of that source’s Catholic implications. These were particularly inappropriate to Wither. Though Cyndia Clegg is right to observe the anti-Calvinism of Wither’s subsequent works, in 1614 this was not yet apparent; at this date Wither’s religious politics were defined by the vehement hostility asserted in both his previous publications towards ‘the beast of Rome and his fou[l]e brood / Of clymyng Cardinals’. As Alan Pritchard has argued, it seems likely to have been these sentiments that had led to his imprisonment, at the instigation of the prominent Catholic sympathiser the Earl of Northampton.<sup>16</sup> In these circumstances, depicting Roget/Wither performing a work of ‘catholik lernynge’ seems at best infortuitous, at worst provocative.

<sup>11</sup> Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, 36; Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1999), ll. 325-85 (further citations will be from this edition, by line-number).

<sup>12</sup> J.S. Brewer *et al.*, eds, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, 21 vols (London, 1862-1910), vol.18 pt 2, 304; Robert Wisdom, Emmanuel College Library MS 261, 95<sup>r</sup>; John Bale, *Yet a Course at the Romyshe Foxe* (1543), 57<sup>r</sup>; all cited in Susan Wabuda, ‘Bishops and the Provision of Homilies, 1520 to 1547’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 25 (1994), 551-66 (555, 559).

<sup>13</sup> *A Record of Auncient Histories, Entituled in Latin: Gesta romanorum*, ed. Richard Robinson (1595), Aiii<sup>v</sup>-Aiv<sup>r</sup>. The Countess of Lennox died in 1578, but the dedication is carried over from the first printing (1577), which does not survive; see W. W. Greg, ‘Richard Robinson and the Stationers’ Register’, *Modern Language Review* 50 (1955), 407-13 (408).

<sup>14</sup> ‘Jonathas’, ll. 29-30; cf. ‘A Dialogue’, l. 820, and ‘Jereslaus’s Wife’, ll. 1-2, 963-75. The latter is also taken from the *Gesta*; unlike ‘Jonathas’, it does appear in Robinson’s edition (*Record of Auncient Histories*, 124<sup>r</sup>-138<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>15</sup> A. S. G. Edwards, ‘Medieval Manuscripts Owned by William Browne of Tavistock (1590/1?-1643/5?)’, in James P. Carley and Colin G. C. Tite, eds, *Books and Collectors 1200-1700: Essays Presented to Andrew Watson* (London, 1997), 441-50.

<sup>16</sup> Cyndia Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, 2001), 48; Wither, *Abuses*, G7<sup>v</sup> (cf. Wither, *Prince Henries Obsequies* (1612), C2<sup>r</sup>, D1<sup>v</sup>, D4<sup>v</sup>, E3<sup>r</sup>); Pritchard, ‘Wither’s Imprisonment’, *passim*.

If the choice of poem was questionable, so was the choice of poet. Hoccleve's self-proclaimed links with Chaucer were one notable feature of his poetry, but another was his periodic bouts of mental illness. These are described in autobiographical sections of his two major works, *The Regiment of Princes* (c. 1411) and *The Series*; Browne owned manuscripts of both. The fullest discussion, however, comes in *The Series*, the poem-sequence which includes 'Jonathas'. In the two linked poems that begin this work, 'My Complaite' and 'A Dialogue', Hoccleve describes an earlier period of madness, and his paranoid conviction that others continue to doubt his sanity.<sup>17</sup>

Since in 1614 neither *The Regiment of Princes* nor the other poems in *The Series* had ever been printed, these features of Hoccleve's work would have been known only to those with whom Browne had shared his manuscripts. Wither seems likely to have been among these; the endnote's pointer towards 'the rest of his workes . . . all perfect in my hands' was virtually an invitation to follow 'Jonathas' back to its origin. Yet he might have found his association with this mentally unstable poet disconcerting, since in his own poetry Wither complains repeatedly that others accuse him of madness.

An early statement of this problem comes in the first of Wither's contributions to *The Shepheards Pipe*, 'Thirsis and Alexis'. In this poem 'Alexis', representing the Spenserian associate William Ferrar, bluntly informs 'Thirsis' (Wither) that 'till I mark'd the aim thy satyrs had, / I thought them over-bold, and Thirsis mad' (F6<sup>v</sup>). Wither is careful to make Alexis frame this as an error – 'I did doe thy nature wrong / . . . I had all mistooke' (F5<sup>v</sup>-F6<sup>v</sup>) – but the suspicions seem to have persisted. *Wither's Motto* (1621) anticipates how 'fools' may 'deride' it as the product of 'distempered Phantasies' (E8<sup>v</sup>). In *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628) he reminds himself how in the past 'common Reason . . . suppos'd thee mad', and expects a similar response to this new work: 'vulgar men' will imagine him to have 'grown distemper'd . . . / Vent[ing] melancholy passions', or 'As mad, as Paul, to Festus, did appeare' (85<sup>r</sup>, 75<sup>r</sup>, 207<sup>v</sup>). And *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635), in which Wither frankly acknowledged the freedom with which he had wrested to his own purposes the images he was supposedly interpreting, adapts a waning moon to this now-familiar application: 'to some, I quite may seeme to lose / My Light; because, my follies interpose / Their shadowes to eclipse it . . .' (111, 182).

The note of rueful acknowledgement here is significant, since as well as complaining about accusations of madness, Wither often hinted that there might be substance to them. The satire of *Abuses Stript, and Whipt* is directed against disorders of the passions: those 'strange distemperatures', as Wither calls them, to which man's soul grew subject after the fall (C6<sup>v</sup>). *Abuses* is structured accordingly, as a collection of poems each dealing with a particular passion and its associated vices. But Wither regularly acknowledges that his own self-governance is equally faulty. Book One, having completed its description of 'mens Abused passions', closes with a concession that 'here with others faults I tell mine owne' (K2<sup>r</sup>, K4<sup>v</sup>). Book Two opens with a personal prayer for self-control: 'grant me power [to] / . . . flye those evils that from Passion flow' (K6<sup>r</sup>); and a closing poem, 'The Scourge', asks 'what if I my self should hap to stray, / Out of my bounds into my Satyrs way?' (V6<sup>v</sup>). But the straying may already have occurred, since the introductory verses announce that these satires on the passions themselves spring from passionate compulsion: 'A sacred Fury hath possest my braines / . . . 'Til that be utter'd I expect no rest / . . . I shall grow furious till this taske be done' (C3<sup>r-v</sup>). In *A Satyre* (1614) Wither would again recall the writing of *Abuses* in 'Hot blood . . . enrag'd with passions . . . / either madde, or somewhat worse' (B4<sup>r</sup>, D8<sup>r</sup>). Ungoverned passions are a problem for Wither himself, as well as those his satires attack.

<sup>17</sup> Bowers, 'Politics of Tradition', *passim*; *Regiment of Princes*, ll. 1-280, 757-84; 'My Complaite', *passim*; 'A Dialogue', ll. 35-79, 296-494.

The ‘constancy’ that was such an important value for Wither throughout this earlier part of his career relates to this problem, and needs to be read accordingly, in the shadow of inward perturbation as well as the light of political commitment. When Wither uses this stoic term, he is exhorting himself to stay true to his political principles, and to the published works that express them, but also to master his own passions. In the case of *Abuses*, these three things were almost the same, since this was a work that described the socio-political damage that unmastered passions could cause. One of the ways that the preface’s dedication ‘to him-selfe’ could be interpreted was as suggesting that Wither ‘him-selfe’ was in particular need of such a book, because his own passions were especially unruly. Though also motivated by a desire to retain his independence by avoiding patronage, Wither described the dedication’s ‘principal reason’ (A4<sup>v</sup>) as being to remind his ‘Selfe’ to ‘bid defiance to the Flesh . . . labour it with diligent watchfulnesse over affection . . . hast thou not often felt . . . Passions . . . to invade thee?’ (A5<sup>r</sup>-A6<sup>v</sup>). The requisite reminders were, of course, to be provided in the poems against the passions that the rest of *Abuses* contained. The preface’s tenuous sign-off further suggests the importance of these to their author: ‘thine owne while Reason masters Affection. Geo. Wither’ (A8<sup>v</sup>). In one sense these passages are simply employing a modesty topos to convey a Calvinist sense of universal depravity. ‘It is not I alone’, as Wither later puts it, who is ‘un-stable; but e’ne all that be / . . . none (I say) is from this frailty free’ (P6<sup>v</sup>). But the preface’s striking address to ‘him-selfe, G. W.’ makes a more specific application difficult to avoid.

Wither’s special vulnerability to perturbation emerges more sharply in subsequent works. For early moderns, failure to master one’s passions was not identical with madness, but it could be placed on the same continuum. As scholars such as Angus Gowland and Christopher Tilmouth have observed, neostoic moral philosophy was an important source for this perspective.<sup>18</sup> Thomas Chaloner’s translation of Erasmus’s *Praise of Follie* (1549) – a work whose contemporary popularity was noted in 1618 by Milton – conveys the flexibly-conceived relationship that the Stoics appeared to suggest: ‘accordyng to the Stoikes diffinicion . . . folie, [is] to be ledde as affection will . . . [and] folie is nexte sybbe unto madnesse, or rather madnesse it selfe’.<sup>19</sup> Wither’s anxieties about his personal capacity for ‘constancy’ are similarly grounded in neostoic thought, and in the self-portraits he offers in later works, the folly of affection slides towards its sibling. In the second of Wither’s two contributions to *The Shepheards Pipe*, Roget/Wither voices an enraptured address to poetry: ‘Though our wise ones call thee madness, / Let me never taste of gladness / If I love not thy mad’st fits . . .’. Willy/Browne is concerned: ‘Good Roget tarry . . . Call thy selfe to minde againe’ (I<sup>r-v</sup>). In Wither’s other prison-poem from this period, *A Satyre* (1614), he envisages madness as a response to his predicament. In the face of such injustice, ‘he that’s lesse then madde, is more then Man’, and this outrage is powerful enough to destabilise the poem as Wither writes it: his ‘muse’ may ‘loose her wits, for she raves madly / . . . my love abus’d / Disturbs my thoughts, and makes my lines confus’d’ (C4<sup>r</sup>, C3<sup>v</sup>, E5<sup>v</sup>). *Wither’s Motto* (1621) wistfully praises those who can master their passions – ‘a braver strength then Sampson got: / And this, I covet, but I have it not’ – and again casts the ‘raptures’ of inspiration as verging on madness: ‘I feele my braine, / Wax giddy . . .’ (B6<sup>v</sup>, E8<sup>v</sup>).

This kind of thing became sufficiently characteristic to be singled out in two ripostes by Wither’s opponents, *Taylor’s Motto* (1623), by John Taylor the Water-Poet, and the anonymous *Answer to Withers Motto* (1625). ‘Holla holla Muse’, Taylor’s Wither yells bathetically, ‘come back againe / I was halfe ravisht’. The surprisingly thoughtful *Answer* observes how ‘you confesse . . . many times a perverse haire-brain’d will / To over-bear the motives of your soule, / Whereby

<sup>18</sup> Angus Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge, 2006), 14-15; Christopher Tilmouth, ‘Burton’s “Turning Picture”: Argument and Anxiety in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*’, *Review of English Studies*, NS 56 (2005), 524-49 (535-37).

<sup>19</sup> Erasmus, *The Praise of Folie*, trans. Thomas Chaloner (1549), Cii<sup>v</sup>, Giii<sup>v</sup>. Milton, *Prolusion VI*, trans. Phyllis B. Tillyard, in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe, 8 vols (New Haven, 1953–), 1.211; cited in Gowland, *Renaissance Melancholy*, 19.

your frailties doe the rest controule'.<sup>20</sup> Yet in *Britain's Remembrancer* Wither returned to the theme of his own troublesome affections with renewed intensity. 'I have within my soule, distempers, passions', he confessed; 'My flesh hath frailties which are dangerous, / To mine owne safety'. The extreme stress of the situation which *Remembrancer* describes – the 1625 plague outbreak – was filling him with 'dangerous melancholy' that caused 'waking dreame[s] . . . such as they have had . . . that grow desperate mad' (88<sup>r</sup>, 145<sup>r</sup>, 151<sup>r</sup>, 105<sup>r</sup>, 111<sup>v</sup>).

Passages like these, and many more could be cited, offer an important supplement to the existing critical portrait of Wither the public and political poet. They show the strand of his writing that turns inward, concerning itself with mental 'frailties' from which he too claims to suffer. The persistence of this concern throws new light on Browne's choice of Hoccleve, a poet in whose work mental illness plays an unusually prominent role, as Wither's medieval counterpart. But it also has a bearing on Willy's advice to Roget to 'sing / . . . some other kind of lore', and the use of 'Jonathas' to exemplify that change. This is because, in the reflexive dialogues that link the poems of *The Series*, 'Jonathas' is framed in similar terms, as the outcome of a friend's advice that Hoccleve should try writing in a different, less hazardous style. And the motivation for that advice is to solve the problems caused by Hoccleve's mental illness, an illness whose resolution 'Jonathas', the *Series*' closing poem, may be seen to represent.

The advice is given in the second poem of *The Series*, known simply as 'A Dialogue'. The contents of this poem are highly relevant to the dialogue between Willy and Roget that introduces Browne's transcription of 'Jonathas' – so relevant that Browne's eclogue may be seen as based on two poems from the *Series* rather than one. While the central section of Browne's eclogue directly transcribes 'Jonathas', that is, its pastoral opening derives in equally significant ways from 'A Dialogue'. To explore the implications of this second, less obvious dependency, it will be necessary to give an outline of the *Series*' intricate structure.

#### MADNESS AND STYLE IN HOCCLEVE'S *SERIES*

*The Series* consists of two linked autobiographical poems, 'My Compleinte' and 'A Dialogue', followed by three adaptations: the *Gesta romanorum* tale 'Jereslaus's Wife', a part-translation of an *Ars Moriendi* treatise entitled 'Lerne to Dye', and a second tale from the *Gesta*, 'Jonathas'. The sequence is unified by framing dialogues between Hoccleve and a character known only as 'Friend', in which the selection and composition of the poems that comprise it is discussed. The introspective 'My Compleinte' and 'Lerne to dye' are presented as Hoccleve's own choices, but the two *Gesta* stories are imagined as having been imposed upon him by Friend, a kind of artistic adviser who is introduced in 'A Dialogue', and returns in brief framing passages at the end of 'Jereslaus's wife' and the beginning of 'Jonathas'. These passages further emphasise that the inclusion of the *Gesta* material is Friend's idea, by showing him providing the copy of the *Gesta* from which Hoccleve works, and demanding the inclusion of extra material: firstly the moralisation section of 'Jereslaus's wife', which Hoccleve was going to leave out, and then 'Jonathas' itself, which Friend unexpectedly returns to demand as a closing poem after 'Lerne to Dye', with which Hoccleve had intended to finish.<sup>21</sup> The *Gesta* poems in the *Series* are thus established as reflecting Friend's tastes rather than Hoccleve's, and included at Friend's insistence against Hoccleve's own preferences. Willy's suggestion of 'Jonathas' seems artless, but Friend's more forceful persuasions stand behind it.

The argument that sets up this dynamic is described in the second poem, 'A Dialogue'; the other poems pivot around this one, as Friend and Hoccleve try to decide what *The Series* should include. It begins with a piece of narratological trickery in which Hoccleve depicts himself reading to Friend the poem which precedes it, 'My Compleinte', which he has just finished

<sup>20</sup> John Taylor, *Taylor's Motto* (1621), C4<sup>v</sup>; T. G., *An Answer to Withers Motto* (1625), B3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> 'A Dialogue', *passim*; 'Jereslaus's Wife', ll. 953-80; 'Jonathas', ll. 1-84.

writing (ll. 1-17). Friend then passes judgement on this and two other of Hoccleve's works, the earlier *Letter of Cupid* (a separate work which does not form part of the *Series*), and 'Lerne to Dye', depicted as a new project on which Hoccleve is about to embark. Friend objects to all three: he thinks that 'My Compleinte' will remind people of Hoccleve's madness rather than proving his recovery, *Letter of Cupid* is misogynistic, and 'Lerne to Dye' too arduous and depressing for Hoccleve's fragile mind (ll. 18-34, 295-315, 667-756). Friend's objections are thus based on concerns for Hoccleve's reputation and sanity, and the *Gesta* stories can be seen to represent remedies for each of these problems. 'Jereslaus's wife' makes up for the supposed misogyny of *Letter of Cupid* with its story of a woman of extraordinary virtue; and in 'Jonathas', as the moralisation makes clear, the hero must heal his ailing reason in order to triumph over his own passions. These are personified in Jonathas's faithless lover Fellicula, who represents 'his wrecchid flesh . . . styrnge him to synne' (ll. 701-2). When she maroons him at the ends of the earth, he encounters one river which strips away his flesh (it 'twynneth and disseverith . . . fleshly affeccions'), and another which restores it (ll. 424-86, 713-15). With water from this second river he heals a nearby king, identified as 'resoun', who suffers from leprosy. Jonathas then returns home to poison Fellicula, appropriately, with the first, flesh-stripping water: with her demise 'the flesh (that is to seyn, carnel or fleshly affeccoun) . . . sterveth and dieth' (ll. 499-532, 654-66, 725-29).

The moralisation shows this poem's aptness for Wither, the poet of 'mens Abused passions'. But as David Watt has observed, it also suggests that Jonathas is to be identified with Hoccleve, whose reason has also stood, and may still stand, in need of healing.<sup>22</sup> This parallel is underlined by a description of how Jonathas's troubles have altered his appearance: 'thoght [had] changed eek his face' (l. 582). The use of 'thoght' in this sense of psychological stress is not unique to Hoccleve, but it is strongly associated with him. 'My Compleinte' describes his 'thoughtful maladie' and 'thoughtful disese', and lays particular emphasis on his illness's possible effects on his appearance, which Hoccleve scrutinises in a mirror for signs that 'any othir were it than it ought' (ll. 21, 388, 159). The prologue to *The Regiment of Princes* similarly develops 'thoght' as a key term describing Hoccleve's condition: 'thoght, my cruel fo . . . The smert of thoght I by experience / Knowe as wel as any man dooth lyvyng' (ll. 73, 106-7).<sup>23</sup>

Browne was in a position to appreciate the significance of 'thoght' for the distinctive authorial persona that Hoccleve had constructed, since he owned copies of both *The Regiment of Princes* and *The Series*. His manuscript of the latter – now Durham MS Cosin V.iii.9 –<sup>24</sup> also contains two features that might have highlighted the Hoccleve-Jonathas parallel. In a section of 'My Compleinte' in which Hoccleve imagines himself comforted by a personified Reason, the Durham manuscript inserts speech prefixes for 'Reason' and 'Thomas'. The self-division this expresses helps to link this opening poem of the *Series* to the psychomachic allegory – the battle of Jonathas's ailing 'Resoun' against 'fleshly affeccions' – which closes it. The opening pages of 'Jonathas' in this manuscript also contain a marginal annotation, in a hand that has been dated to c. 1500, which underlines this theme: 'I count his conquest greate / That canne by reasons scylle, / Subdue affections . . .'.<sup>25</sup> To an early modern reader such as Browne, familiar with the stoic interpretation of madness as a product of unsubdued affections, it would have been easy to follow the logic of these lines from Jonathas back to the Hoccleve of 'My Compleinte', in whom

<sup>22</sup> David Watt, *The 'Thoughtful Maladie': Melancholy and Society in Thomas Hoccleve's Series* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford, 2004), 271.

<sup>23</sup> D. C. Greetham, 'Self-Referential Artifacts: Hoccleve's Persona as a Literary Device', *Modern Philology* 86 (1989), 242-51 (246-47); Watt, *Thoughtful Maladie*, 11, 113-42, 252-71. See also *The Regiment of Princes*, ll. 12-14, 80-86, 185-86; Lynn Margaret Dunlop, *Cities Without Walls: the Politics of Melancholy from Machaut to Lydgate* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1998), 7-16.

<sup>24</sup> Edwards, 'Medieval Manuscripts', 442-43. Edwards is wrong to assert (448n) that Browne copied the opening lines of 'Jonathas' into British Library Lansdowne MS 699, 95<sup>r</sup>; the words here are the opening of *Britannia's Pastorals*.

<sup>25</sup> Durham MS Cosin V.iii.9, 7<sup>r-v</sup>, 83<sup>r</sup>.



reason's skill had faltered. The annotation also highlights this theme's affinity with Wither's *Abuses*, which includes a similar passage: 'none more wo[r]thy be/ To have renowne for strength, then those that can, / On their rebellious Pass[i]ons play the man' (Q<sup>v</sup>). The sentiment was common, and the Durham annotation is probably neither Wither's nor Browne's. But it helps to place 'Jonathas' as the middle link in a chain that ties passions to madness and Hoccleve to Wither.

Where Roget easily accepts Willy's advice to change his tune, however, in Hoccleve things go less smoothly; critics who have discovered here a story of gently guided rehabilitation have missed *The Series*' edges.<sup>26</sup> These are particularly apparent in the contrast between opening and closing poems. Both are concerned with defects of reason, but where 'My Complaite', voiced by Hoccleve, presents his madness as an act of God, 'Jonathas', chosen by Friend, depicts a failure of self-governance. In 'A Dialogue' poetic style comes to symbolise these differences, with Hoccleve's preference for spontaneous self-expression clashing with Friend's demands for a more controlled approach. Drawing on Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*, Friend insists that Hoccleve should write with greater 'avisament' and 'foresight', planning his works to appeal to specific audiences ('A Dialogue', ll. 638-49).<sup>27</sup> The implicit target of this criticism is the intensely personal 'My Complaite', which is introduced by the Hoccleve-narrator as an outburst of emotion: 'The greef aboute myn herte so sore swal / . . . I braste out on the morwe and thus bigan' ('My Complaite', ll. 29-35). Friend ends his Vinsaufian principles of composition with a barely-concealed reproof to this way of writing: 'Who by prudence / Rule him shal, nothing shal out from him breke / Hastily ne of rakel negligence' ('A Dialogue', ll. 653-55).

The negligence at stake here slips easily from the governance of style to that of the self. Friend implies that Hoccleve's resistance to his advice is symbolic of a wider failure to take responsibility for his own problems, in tones that become increasingly threatening. 'Do foorth', he ironically suggests, 'thyn harm reneewe / . . . holdist it thow a prudence / Reed weyve [to shun advice]? / . . . What, art thow now presumptuous become[?]' ('A Dialogue', ll. 416, 449-50, 454). This becomes particularly marked in his strictures against the supposedly misogynistic *Letter of Cupid*. Friend describes this earlier work as an 'offense' for which Hoccleve bears 'hevy . . . guilt' and must do 'satisfaccion' and 'correccioun' with 'greet repentance' (ll. 664-66, 674-75, 716). 'Humble thy goost', Friend instructs him, 'be nat sturdy of herte . . . thyn herte bowe' (ll. 692, 715), a 'submission' to be expressed through public poetic recantation: 'by scripture hem haast offendid / right so, let it be by writing amended' (ll. 687, 699-700). Objections are swept aside, and 'A Dialogue' closes with Hoccleve's meek promise of 'obedience': 'I lowly me submit / . . . Unto me, wretch, it well may sit / to axe pardon' (ll. 813-16).

There is a playfulness here based on the notion that women are the fearsome enemy Hoccleve must face, but these are odd sentiments to find standing behind Browne's tribute to his wrongfully-imprisoned colleague, whose need of 'pardon' for his imprudent verses was very real. In 'A Dialogue', Friend's advice creates tensions which extend throughout the *Series*. Browne copies the advice and omits the tensions, but they press against his poem's surface. The endnote, with its pointer towards the rest of Hoccleve's works, directs Wither's attention to this subtext, inviting him to consider what Browne has left out as well as what he has included. Fourteen years later, in *Britain's Remembrancer*, Wither would ask

will not all account me mad to vent  
Such Lines as these? adventuring to be shent,  
And be undone . . . (203<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>26</sup> J. A. Burrow, 'Hoccleve's Series: Experience and Books', in *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, ed. Robert F. Yeager (Hamden, 1984), 259-73. For a contrasting view, see Sebastian James Langdell, "'What World Is This? How Undirstande Am I?'" A Reappraisal of Poetic Authority in Thomas Hoccleve's *Series*, *Medium Ævum* 78 (2009), 281-99.

<sup>27</sup> On the Vinsauf parallels, see J. A. Burrow, ed., *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue* (Oxford, 1999), 104n.

He may have been recalling how Browne's comparison with Hoccleve had seemed to do just that.

#### HOCCLEVE, WITHER AND SATIRE

Rather than consoling Wither, the 'Jonathas' eclogue could thus be read as a critique. But Browne's intention may have been different. In 1614 Wither was first and foremost a satirist, and as Alvin Kernan long ago established, the madness of the satirist was an important trope of early modern English satire.<sup>28</sup> One of the few examples that Kernan fails to cite is the Marprelate controversy, when anti-Martinist invective helped to establish mad Martin the bedlamite, with his 'satirical and do[d]geon style', as an unexpectedly compelling figure.<sup>29</sup> Later satirists developed similar personae. Marston, in his influential collection of verse satires *The Scourge of Villainie* (1598-99), claimed to be 'frantique, foolish, bedlam mad, / . . . madder than a bedlam'; Nicholas Breton's 'Pasquil' took the nickname 'Mad-Cap' and wrote in 'madde humour[s]' and 'madding fits'.<sup>30</sup>

Kernan's narrative remains persuasive, but his conflation of passages like these with satiric commonplaces of whipping and lashing to link satire with an 'unnatural' sadism (108) is less convincing. Rather than sexual pathology, commentators in the period related the satirist's predisposition to madness to the problem of self-governance. Nash sarcastically observed how a cardinal virtue of his Marprelate opponents was 'Temperance, for they govern their passions passingly wel'.<sup>31</sup> In 1601 the anonymous author of the *Whipping of the Satyre* extended this critique: 'friend Satyrist . . . your affection over-rules your reason, and therefore you are . . . sudden of passion' (A3). As Barten Holyday, author of the first complete English translations of Persius and Juvenal, explained in 1616, this was typical of satirists: 'the fury of his passion doth so transport him . . . most commonly their passions are uneven, rough, and furious'. The model for this was Juvenal's *difficile est saturam non scribere* – 'it is difficult *not* to write satire' – which portrayed satire as an uncontrollable outburst provoked by a corrupt world.<sup>32</sup> Holyday tellingly exaggerates these lines – 'who but needs must straight / Breath Satyre?' –<sup>33</sup> and early modern satirists often heightened the sentiment through a companion's call for restraint. In the sixth eclogue of Mantuan, whose pastoral satires were an important influence on the Spenserians, Fulica reproves Cornix: 'your rage / beyonde all reason goes . . . / Nay, now you farre exceede / the bounds of meane [*rationis*] and right'.<sup>34</sup> Asper, the satirist-hero of Jonson's *Every Man Out of his Humour* (1599), is similarly upbraided by both Mitis – 'Contain your spirit . . . / be not thus transported' – and Cordatus: 'this is right *furor poeticus*! / . . . a madman speaks'.<sup>35</sup> Willy's worried admonishment of Roget in Wither's *Shepheards Pipe* eclogue – 'call thyself to mind' – is drawing

<sup>28</sup> Alvin Kernan, *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance* (London, 1959), 108-17.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew Sutcliffe, *An Answer to a Certaine Libel Supplicatorie* (1592), 67. On 'mad Martin', see Thomas Nash, *Mar-Martine* (1589), A<sup>v</sup>; Nash, *Martins Months Minde* (1589), D3<sup>v</sup>; John Lyly, *A Whip for an Ape* (1589), 4, 7; Lyly, *Pappe with an Hatchet* (1589), D4<sup>r</sup>, E2<sup>v</sup>; Richard Harvey, *Plaine Percevall the Peace-Maker of England* (1590), A3<sup>v</sup>. On the 'collaborative discourses' of Marprelate and his opponents see Joseph Black, *The Martin Marprelate Tracts: a Modernized and Annotated Edition* (Cambridge, 2008), lxxiii-lxxv.

<sup>30</sup> Marston, *The Scourge of Villainie*, 2nd edn, G8<sup>v</sup>, H2<sup>r</sup>; Breton, *Pasquils Mad-Cap*, A2<sup>r</sup>; Breton, *Pasquils Fooles-Cap* (1600), A4<sup>v</sup>; Kernan, *Cankered Muse*, 53, 116-17.

<sup>31</sup> Nash, *Martins Months Minde*, A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Barten Holyday, *Aulus Persius Flaccus His Satires*, (1616), A3<sup>v</sup>; Juvenal, *Satires*, 1.30.

<sup>33</sup> Barten Holyday, *Decimus Junius Juvenalis, and Aulus Persius Flaccus Translated and Illustrated* (1673), 2. This translation was begun in or before 1618: see G. L. Brodersen, 'Seventeenth-Century Translations of Juvenal', *Phoenix* 7 (1953), 57-76 (68-70).

<sup>34</sup> Mantuan, *The Eglogs of the Poet B. Mantuan Carmelitan*, trans. George Turberville (1567), 63<sup>r</sup>, 64<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Jonson, *Every Man Out*, 'After the Second Sounding', ll. 46-48, 147-50. See also Mary Claire Randolph, 'The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Satiric Theory: Its Possible Relationships and Implications', *Studies in Philology* 38 (1941), 125-57 (154-56).

on precedents such as these, in which an alarmed response underlines the strength of Juvenalian outrage.

Browne could have read Hoccleve's 'Compleinte' and 'Dialogue' along similar lines, with Friend's negative reaction to the emotive 'My Compleinte' functioning as an extended version of this kind of reproof. But this was not only thing that linked *The Series* to early modern satire. I have already noted the prologue to 'My Compleinte' which frames it as an outburst of passion: 'The greef about myn herte so sore swal / . . . That nedis oute I muste / . . . I braste out on the morwe and thus bigan'. These lines are followed by the rubric 'Here . . . folwith my compleinte' ('My Compleinte', ll. 29-36). The opening to Nash's satire *Pierce Penilesse* (1592) sounds very similar. Pierce describes how he 'ragde in all points like a mad man. In which agony tormenting myself . . . I resolved in verse to paint forth my passion . . . [and] began to complaine in this sort' (A'). Hoccleve's autumnal grief may seem different from Pierce's raging madness, but – as Kernan notes – both Nash and Marston could give satiric *indignatio* a similarly introspective twist. *The Anatomie of Absurditie* (1589), Nash declared, was prompted by 'that pensivenes, which two Summers since overtooke mee: whose obscured cause . . . hath compelled . . . this satyricall disguise' (¶.iii<sup>r</sup>). Marston claimed a similar origin for his satires in the gloomy 'melancholly' of his 'vexed thoughtfull soule'. The Hoccleve of 'My Compleinte' is also 'vexid' by a 'thoughtful maladie' whose origins lie 'five yeere' previously – compare Nash's 'pensiveness' stemming from 'two summers since' – and which *Regiment of Princes* identifies as 'malencolie'.<sup>36</sup>

Since it seems unlikely that Nash or Marston had access to Hoccleve, these resemblances are presumably coincidental, but to early modern eyes they would have helped Hoccleve to look like a satirist. There would have been little strain involved here. Early modern commentators viewed Chaucer and Langland, both strong influences on Hoccleve, as English equivalents to the Roman satirists.<sup>37</sup> 'A Dialogue' also contains at least two other features that could have strengthened the identification of Hoccleve with satire. One of these is the misogyny of which Friend accuses him. Misogyny held an accepted place in the satiric repertoire, derived principally from Juvenal's sixth satire. Mantuan's fourth eclogue, *De natura mulierum*, is a poem of this type, which earned him the title 'female-mastix' (whipper of women) from one early seventeenth-century satirist;<sup>38</sup> other examples are the second satire of Guilpin's *Skialetheia* (1598), and Browne's own seventh eclogue in *The Shepheards Pipe*. The link between misogyny and satire was also reflected in the "Bishops' Ban" of 1599, which as well as the more obviously satirical poems of Hall, Guilpin and Marston, also called in two antifeminist works on marriage; one of these is referred to in the Bishops' declaration as 'the booke againste woemen', a description whose satiric implications have been observed by Richard McCabe.<sup>39</sup> The fact that, as Hoccleve protests, *Letter of Cupid* is not misogynistic at all – it is, in fact, a defence of women by a female author, Christine de Pizan – only offers a further point of contact between its hapless author and early modern satirists, who often claimed to be innocent victims of politic picklocks.<sup>40</sup> As Roget laments in Browne's eclogue, 'Any pleasing Roundelay' can be suspected (B2').

But if Friend's strictures against passionate outbursts and misogyny make Hoccleve look Juvenalian, their debate also evokes a different Roman satirist, Horace: specifically the first satire of Horace's second book. In this poem Horace, under pressure from the angry reception of his

<sup>36</sup> Kernan, *Cankered Muse*, 111-13; Marston, *The Scourge of Villanie*, 2nd edn, B4<sup>r</sup>; Hoccleve, 'My Compleinte', ll. 21, 56; Hoccleve, *Regiment of Princes*, l. 217. See also Watt, *Thoughtful Maladie*, 117-23.

<sup>37</sup> Marston, *The Scourge of Villanie*, 2nd edn, B3<sup>r-v</sup>; George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), 20; Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia* (1598), 283<sup>v</sup>. See John Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature* (Oxford, 1956), 109; Kernan, *Cankered Muse*, 59; Bowers, 'Politics of Tradition', 361-62.

<sup>38</sup> 'Julia', ll. 13-14, in *The Poems of John Donne*, ed. Robin Robbins, rev. edn (Harlow, 2010), 948; the poem is not now thought to be Donne's. See also Susanna H. Braund, 'Juvenal – Misogynist or Misogamist?', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992), 71-86.

<sup>39</sup> *The Stationers Registers, Register C*, 316a-316b; cited and discussed in Richard McCabe, 'Elizabethan Satire and the Bishops' Ban of 1599', *Yearbook of English Studies* 11 (1981), 188-93 (190).

<sup>40</sup> 'A Dialogue', ll. 757-80; Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Induction, l. 138; Wheeler, *Verse Satire*, 82.

first book of satires, asks the lawyer Trebatius what to write next. Trebatius suggests an epic on the deeds of Augustus, which would serve to ingratiate him with the new regime. Horace claims that much as he'd like to, he feels he's not up to it, and, having tried out a few lines in epic style, he re-affirms his commitment to satire, the style to which his nature (*natura*) is most suited.<sup>41</sup>

Mantuan, Hall, and Wither himself were among the early modern satirists who produced their own versions of this important moment of *recusatio*.<sup>42</sup> But Horace's rejection of epic also has parallels in 'A Dialogue', with *Letter of Cupid* taking the place of the first book of *Satires*, Friend playing the role of Trebatius, and Hoccleve's erstwhile patron Humphrey of Gloucester standing in for Augustus. Around the middle of 'A Dialogue', Friend reminds Hoccleve that he has promised to write something for Humphrey. Hoccleve considers translating an art of chivalry, but decides Humphrey already knows all there is to know on this topic. To prove this he gives a brief account of Humphrey's recent exploits at Cherbourg, before breaking off to confess his inadequacy (ll. 532-616). 'To cronicle his actes wer a good deede', but 'To e[x]presse hem my spirit wolde han fere / . . . I nat souffyse' (ll. 603, 586, 588).

A recent publication that has caused offence, advice to write something to flatter a powerful patron, epic lines tried out then broken off because unsuited to the poet's nature (or 'spirit'); Horace and Hoccleve are close enough here to lend strength to recent arguments that Roman satire was better-known to medieval writers than has been thought.<sup>43</sup> But in 1614 the idea that parts of *The Series* were based on *Satires* 2.1 may have been more than usually likely to present itself.

Jonathas's theme of the control of passion already suggested one area of relevance, but if Browne read the Hoccleve and Friend of 'A Dialogue' as a medieval Horace and Trebatius, it made even more sense to use *The Series* as a tribute to Wither, since the issue in Horace's poem is libel. It opens with the question of whether Horace may be 'straining my work beyond the law' (*ultra legem*), and closes with Trebatius's caution: 'you've been warned, so take care . . . If a party shall have composed harmful verses against anyone, there are the law and the courts' (ll. 1-2, 80-83). Two years after *The Shepheards Pipe*, in his 1616 *Workes*, Ben Jonson underscored this poem's relevance to the times by publishing his own translation of it in a new scene added to *Poetaster*. Jonson extended Horace's simple *scribam* ('I will write', l. 60) to 'I will write satyrs still, in spite of fear'. As Victoria Moul has observed, this is only the most obvious of a number of alterations throughout Jonson's version that intensify its sense of threat.<sup>44</sup>

Though scholars have differed over the extent to which Jacobean anxieties about censorship corresponded to reality, Andrew McRae has pointed to an 'undeniable fear of repression which informs writing throughout the period'.<sup>45</sup> It was a 'wincy age' in which writers could run into trouble with powerful individuals, such as Wither's persecutor the Earl of Northampton, on the unpredictable basis of perceived slight. Northampton's enthusiasm for libel prosecutions was notorious, and at least one contemporary appears to have viewed him as essentially refashioning the law to suit his personal ends.<sup>46</sup> He was also an adversary whom Jonson and Wither had in common, since a decade previously he had had Jonson called before the privy council over *Sejanus*. Jonson would, of course, go on to satirise Wither in the masque *Time Vindicated* (1623), but this relatively mild attack was still several years in the future, and in 1614 Wither's suffering at the hands of Jonson's 'mortall enimie' was a powerful reason for

<sup>41</sup> Horace, *Satires*, 2.1, ed. cit. Horace, *Satires II*, ed. and trans. Frances Muecke (Warminster, 1993), l. 51 (*Natura*); further citations from this edition. I have amended Muecke's translation in places. See also Kirk Freudenberg, *Satires of Rome: Threatening Poses from Lucilius to Juvenal* (Cambridge, 2001), 75-92.

<sup>42</sup> Mantuan, *Eglogs* trans. Turberville, 48v; Hall, *Virgidemiarum* . . . *First Three Bookes*, A5<sup>r-v</sup>; Wither, *Abuses Stript*, X<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Ben Parsons, "'A Riotous Spray of Words': Rethinking the Medieval Theory of Satire", *Exemplaria* 21 (2009), 105-28.

<sup>44</sup> *Poetaster*, 3.5.100 (emphasis mine); Victoria Moul, *Jonson, Horace and the Classical Tradition*, 148.

<sup>45</sup> McRae, *Literature, Satire*, 7; cf. Clegg, *Press Censorship*, *passim*.

<sup>46</sup> Clegg, *Press Censorship*, 9-123; O'Callaghan, *Shepheards Nation*, 172-73.

sympathy.<sup>47</sup> Coming in a year in which David Norbrook has argued that tensions around censorship were at a high point, it may have directly influenced Jonson's addition to *Poetaster*. Jonson's *Workes* were published in the same year as the second book of Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, to which Jonson contributed a dedicatory poem.<sup>48</sup> Mutual influence seems possible, with Browne, like Jonson, responding to a climate of repression that Wither's imprisonment exemplified by turning to what he saw as a medieval version of Horace's dialogue on the legal hazards of satire.

Hoccleve possessed other Horatian qualities. His occupation, as a privy seal clerk, was similar to Horace's post of *scriba questorius*, mentioned in the *Satires* (2.6.35-37) as well as the Suetonian *vita* prefixed to seventeenth-century editions. Hoccleve discusses his job at length in his poetry, and Browne shows his awareness of it by identifying him as 'one of the privy Seale' in the *Shepheards Pipe* endnote.<sup>49</sup> And though Juvenal exemplified ungovernable passions, Horace was equally likely to be identified with madness, thanks to *Satires* 2.3, in which the Stoic Damasippus insists the whole world is mad, Horace not excepted, and Horace ruefully agrees: 'with what folly do think me to be mad (*insanire*)? . . . I admit I'm a fool . . . and even insane (*insanum*) . . . with what vice of the mind (*animi vitio*) do you think me to be ill (*aegrotare*)?' (ll. 301-2, 305-7). Though modern commentators agree that Horace is mocking stoic extremism, the first English translation of this poem to appear in print took it at Christianised face-value with the title 'The stoicke proves sinne to be a certayne kynde of madnesse'.<sup>50</sup> In 1605 Isaac Casaubon lent similar credence to Damasippus: Horace's 'inconstancy', shown in his differences with the Stoics, made him no 'sure teacher of virtue'. This was a negative spin on a technique that others, such as Minturno, had viewed positively, Horace's habit of implicating himself in the faults he criticised. Viewed in this way, Horace was not distancing himself from the stoic worldview so much as offering his own self-destructive failings as further evidence of its validity. Wither had constructed for himself a satiric persona poised similarly between passionate inconstancy and madness, and used it to achieve similar effects of *deprecatio*: 'here with other faults I tell my own', as he puts it in *Abuses*.<sup>51</sup> It may thus be misleading to characterise Wither's satires as a 'Juvenalian' contrast to Jonson's 'moderate and temperate' Horatianism.<sup>52</sup> Horace and Juvenal could both appear subject to the madness of unregulated passions that characterised the satirist and his targets alike.

If these features made 'A Dialogue' a fit Horatian model for the pastoral scene which begins Browne's eclogue, however, 'Jonathas' possessed equal satiric appeal. Its theme, like that of *Abuses*, was the control of passion. And though 'Jonathas' is included only at Friend's unexpected request, its misogyny – most manuscripts, including Browne's, give it the rubric 'Fabula de quadam muliere mala [Tale of a Certain Wicked Woman]' – looks oddly like a return to the satiric vein supposedly exemplified by *Letter of Cupid*, of which Friend previously disapproved. In the framing dialogue that introduces 'Jonathas', a mystified Hoccleve puts to Friend this obvious inconsistency: 'This that yee me now reede is al contrarie / Unto that yee me red han heer before' (ll. 50-51). Friend responds by claiming that only women with something to feel guilty about will object (ll. 60-70). But for early moderns this line of defence was itself

<sup>47</sup> The description is William Drummond's: *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and P. Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford, 1925–), 1.141, cited in Philip J. Ayres, 'Jonson, Northampton and the "Treason" in *Sejanus*', *Modern Philology* 80 (1983), 356-63 (356).

<sup>48</sup> Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, 191-92; William Browne, *Britannia's Pastorals* (1616), A5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, *Quinti Horatii Flacci poemata* (1607), ¶2<sup>r</sup>; Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ll. 802-4, 1464-1547; Hoccleve, 'My Complainte', ll. 295-99.

<sup>50</sup> Horace, *A Medicinable Morall, that is, the Two Bookes of Horace his Satyres*, trans. Thomas Drant (1566), Fv<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> Isaac Casaubon, *Prolegomena to the Satires of Persius*, ed. and trans. Peter E. Medine, *English Literary Renaissance* 6 (1976), 271-98 (289). On Minturno see James S. Baumbach, 'Generic Contexts of Elizabethan Satire', in Barbara K. Lewalski, ed., *Renaissance Genres: Essays on History, Theory and Interpretation* (London, 1986), 44-67 (452, 458, 464).

<sup>52</sup> O'Callaghan, *Shepheards Nation*, 176. As Raman Selden notes, the Horace-Juvenal antithesis did not emerge until Dryden: *English Verse Satire, 1590-1765* (London, 1978), 46.

strongly associated with satire. As has been seen, it was often expressed through the metaphor of the ‘galled horse’ whose sores lead it to kick out at the slightest touch, the image with which Willy consoles Roget at the start of Browne’s eclogue. One reason for this metaphor’s popularity may have been the fact that, as well as referring to a type of equine ulcer, ‘gall’ was also often used to describe the bitterness of satiric style.<sup>53</sup> This would have provided a further reason to read ‘Jonathas’ as satire, since Hoccleve uses the same term to describe this woman-hating poem’s likely reception, undoing all the good work that ‘Jereslaus’s wife’ had achieved: ‘lo, gooth he’, his female audience will snort, ‘That hony first yaf and now yeveth galle’ (ll. 40-41). In fact, ‘Jonathas’ delivers on this promise in spades, since its villainess Fellicula derives her name from *fel*, the Latin word for gall. Hoccleve spells this out: ‘O Fellicula, thee calle / Wel may Y so, for of the bittir galle / Thow takist the begynnyng of thy name’ (ll. 634-36).

In its original context, Hoccleve’s gall is not likely to have referred to satire. It probably derives, instead, from Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s *poetria nova*, the work which underpins Friend’s insistence in ‘A Dialogue’ on the need for poems to be carefully planned. Every detail must be controlled, Geoffrey observes, since ‘A little gall makes all the honey bitter’ (*Fel modicum totum mel amaricat*).<sup>54</sup> Hoccleve is turning Friend’s favoured text against him. But to early modern eyes, these lines would characterise ‘Jonathas’ as marking Hoccleve’s return to satiric gall, the mode of writing that Friend, in ‘A Dialogue’, had apparently persuaded him to renounce.

This is important, because if ‘A Dialogue’ has important parallels with *Satires* 2.1, it contains a vital difference, since Horace refuses to take Trebatius’s advice. Jonson, as has been seen, emphasised this: ‘I will write satyrs still, *in spite of fear*’ (my emphasis). Yet in ‘A Dialogue’, fear makes Hoccleve ‘lowly me submit’ to his Trebatius’s counsel. ‘When he was goon, I in myn herte dredde / Stonde out of wommennes benevolence’, Hoccleve explains; the sharp enjambment leaves wider threats hanging (ll. 799-800). And it is the *Gesta* tales – aimed specifically at making amends, done out of Friend’s personal copy, and supervised by him – which represent this enforced, fearful recantation. At first glance the *Series* reads dispiritingly like the triumph of Trebatius.

But as Lynn Margaret Dunlop has argued, Hoccleve’s pointed references to *Letter of Cupid*’s misinterpretation are in part an exhortation to read *The Series* itself with care.<sup>55</sup> One of the things that ‘A Dialogue’ achieves, through the reflexive conceit with which it opens – Hoccleve has just finished the preceding poem and reads it to his visitor – is to draw attention to the artful process of its own writing. Friend’s domineering stance makes it easy to forget that the person doing that writing is Hoccleve. This is what lends Hoccleve’s psychopoetic battle with Friend its fascination, because although Friend seems easily to gain the upper hand over the weak-minded poet, ultimate power remains with Hoccleve, since Friend is his creation. If Friend represents society’s disapproval of his preferred styles of writing, Hoccleve has the ultimate writer’s reply: he can just rewrite Friend’s opinions to make them gel with his own. Even better, he can put the blame on Friend, with injured innocence, for forcing him back to his old ways. Hoccleve has learnt his lesson: left to himself, he would never have gone near this recidivist material (ll. 36-37). But Friend, having been silently transformed into a fall-guy by the author he appears to dominate, will have his way.

From Browne’s perspective this dynamic might have seemed especially relevant. In 1614 the dangers of writing satire seemed to have increased, a fact that Wither’s imprisonment for the relatively innocuous *Abuses* could be seen to demonstrate, and to which the Spenserians’ pastoral disguises can be seen as one kind of response. Wither observed this in *A Satyre*: ‘I muse men doe not now in question call, / Seneca, Horace, Perseus, Juvenall / . . . why did not that Age / In

<sup>53</sup> ‘Windgall, n.1’, OED; see Hall, *Virgidemiarum . . . First Three Bookes*, 23, 47; Hall, *Virgidemiarum: the Three Last Bookes* (1598), 5; Guilpin, *Skialetheia*, C2<sup>v</sup>, D5<sup>v</sup>; Randolph, ‘Medical Concept’, 144, 149n.

<sup>54</sup> Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, l. 68; ed. cit. Ernest Gallo, *The Poetria Nova and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine* (Hague, 1971), 16. Gallo’s translation oddly makes the honey an apple.

<sup>55</sup> Dunlop, *Cities Without Walls*, 116.

which they lived, put them in a Cage? / . . . men were juster then' (E<sup>r-v</sup>). Wither, Jonson and their contemporaries were writing 'in spite of fear', a fear which, they thought, exceeded the pressures their classical predecessors had experienced. Read as a version of *Satires* 2.1, the *Series* could be seen to speak directly to this increase in pressures. This poem's Horace was not in a position openly to defy his Trebatius's warnings. He had to work more cunningly, smuggling satiric gall back into his corrected poetry under a veil of compliance.

'Jonathas' thus represented not a sell-out, but a crafty satirist's triumph. The new contexts that its early modern incarnation acquired – its flavours of the Catholicism Wither had attacked, and the 'dark parables' he had disavowed – only enhanced the effectiveness of its camouflage. Browne's compression excised the complexities by which *The Series* achieved this kind of presentation, but they leave a trace in Roget's ambiguous response to Willy's request. 'Sing of love, or tell some tale / Praise the flowers . . .', Willy blandly suggests, but Roget is diffident: 'Though it would beseeme me more / To attend thee and thy lore: / . . . I will sing what I did leere / . . . Of a skilful aged Sire . . .' (B3<sup>r-v</sup>). Roget may mean that he'd rather listen to Willy than sing himself, but he may also be tactfully refusing to 'attend' to Willy's anodyne proposals. Instead he substitutes something that resembles them but is actually quite different: Jonathas, a tale of love which turns out to be a bitterly satiric "book against women". By taking on the role of Friend, Browne self-deprecatingly sets himself up for Roget to outwit.

## RESPONSES

The implication of Browne's *Series* subtext may thus have been that Wither should disguise his satiric principles, not abandon them. But how might this advice have been received? On the face of it, it ran counter to Horace's own views. In *Satires* 2.1, Horace defies Trebatius's suggestion to tone things down by claiming that this kind of writing is to him like teeth to wolves and horns to bulls; it's in his nature (ll. 50-55). Elsewhere, in the *Epistles* – closely associated with the *Satires* in this period – the image of a crow who steals other birds' feathers is famously employed to denounce a competitor's unoriginality.<sup>56</sup> Feathers and horns imply that not only should poets stay true to themselves, they should do so openly, in ways that are visible on their poems' surfaces. This approach had its dangers, but a second spell in prison from 1621-22, following the unlicensed publication of *Withers Motto*, shows that Wither was still prepared to defy them.<sup>57</sup> Browne's 'Jonathas' eclogue, often taken as evidence of the closeness of these poets, opened an argument that extends further into *The Shepherds Pipe*, and beyond it.

The Spenserians have often been seen as writing with a 'collective, corporate voice'; as Joan Grundy observes, the intermingling of authors and alter egos can make it difficult to remember who is writing whom.<sup>58</sup> But keeping track of those differences is exactly the challenge that *The Shepherds Pipe* presents. One of the things this collection is doing is staging a debate about how to write oppositional poetry under the repressive conditions of its day, an issue on which its contributors express very different views. Perhaps prompted by Browne's editorial role, however, they avoid airing their disagreements openly. Instead these poems opt for a distinctively forceful yet covert method of argument that takes its cues from Browne's opening eclogue, in which each poet simply writes the others saying what he'd like to hear. Like Hoccleve's, these are dialogues of contest as well as collaboration.

But Browne's poem also re-fashions *The Series*' reflexive techniques into something more provocative and open-ended. The competitive interest in the struggle that frames Hoccleve's

<sup>56</sup> Horace, *Epistles* 1.3.15-20; Steven Shelburne, 'The Epistolary Ethos of Formal Satire', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 36 (1994), 135-65 (144-45).

<sup>57</sup> J. Milton French, 'George Wither in Prison', *PMLA* 45 (1930), 959-66 (960-61); O'Callaghan, *Shepherds Nation*, 185-86.

<sup>58</sup> O'Callaghan, *Shepherds Nation*, 35; Grundy, *Spenserian Poets*, 80-81.

poem-sequence derives from the notion of an author dominated by his own creation. When this scenario is altered so that the author himself becomes the stylistic adviser, as Willy/Browne does to Roget/Wither in the 'Jonathas' eclogue, this relationship seems in danger of becoming one-sided. But Browne's combination of roles is balanced by the fact that Wither, unlike Friend, is more than merely fictional. As a result, he can answer back, using the same technique to turn the tables on a fictionalised Browne, and other poets can follow his lead. The Spenserian 'print community' starts to echo with a more unruly version of *The Series*' defining conflict, as poets jostle for advisory authority and transformative power.

The first of Wither's several experiments along these lines occurs in the second of his two contributions to *The Shepherds Pipe*, in which he re-writes Browne's eclogue to make Willy/Browne the troubled poet and Roget/Wither the adviser. But as well as reversing the roles, Wither reverses the advice. 'Make forward in thy flight / . . . Finish what thou hast begunne', Roget exhorts (H7<sup>v</sup>, I<sup>v</sup>), and Browne, as written by Wither, unhesitatingly agrees: 'I scorne to flit / On the wings of borrowed wit. / I'll make my owne feathers reare me' (H5<sup>v</sup>). Grundy suggests this may refer to criticism of the derivative nature of Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, but Browne's borrowing from Hoccleve offers a closer referent.<sup>59</sup> Rather than confronting him directly, Wither does to Browne what Browne did to him, writing him into agreement with his own views, 'al contrarie' to the sentiments Browne's pastoral persona has previously expressed.

The argument continues both elsewhere in *The Shepherds Pipe*, and in Wither's subsequent poems. John Davies of Hereford's contribution to Browne's collection takes Wither's side. Like Wither, Davies makes Browne the advisee and himself the adviser, taking the opportunity to demonstrate the kind of solidarity these situations require: 'Of world, ne worl[dl]y men take thou no keepe', he reassures him (G4<sup>v</sup>). Not only does Davies' version of Browne agree with this counsel, he can't help but follow it. 'I am by kind so inly pulde / To these delices', Davies makes him explain, 'that when I betake / My selfe to other lore I more am dul'd' (G6<sup>v</sup>). The poem makes it clear that the 'other lore' here is the legal career that Browne is considering, but the verbal recollection is striking. Davies shows the notion of 'some other kind of lore' being refuted out of its own author's mouth. 'Inly pulde' by virtue of his 'kind', Davies' Browne abandons his earlier caution to become a spokesperson for Horatian *natura*.

It is this revised version of Willy/Browne who returns in Wither's own collection of Spenserian dialogues, *The Shepherds Hunting* (1615). Here the second poem re-imagines the 'Jonathas' eclogue still more directly, with Willy consoling the imprisoned Roget, but using lines that might have been lifted from the opening pages of *Abuses Stript, and Whipt*: 'Steer but on the course / That in thy just adventure is begunne, / . . . Thou art the same thou wert . . . / In nothing changed yet . . . / Still keepe thee thus . . .' (E2<sup>v</sup>). This is what Wither wants to be told, and what he thinks Browne ought to have said.

Elsewhere, the tensions break the surface. *Shepherds Hunting* I appears to recall a real-life disagreement, as Willy/Browne reproaches Roget/Wither for doubting his affection. 'Wrong me not', he warns; 'I never thought to finde thee so unjust . . . Tis time our Loves should these suspects forbear' (B2<sup>v</sup>). But the 'suspects' continued into Wither's female-voiced *Fidelia* (1615), a love-complaint against an 'unconstant Friend' whose crimes include the use of "borrowed wit" (A8<sup>r</sup>, B8<sup>v</sup>). Browne's reply, 'Fido: an Epistle to Fidelia', suggests that he considered himself the friend in question. 'Fido' rebuts the charges but closes with grim recognition that his addressee is unlikely to be persuaded.<sup>60</sup> The works that follow tend to confirm this impression, as Wither stages further dialogues in which words of caution from a Browne-like counsellor – 'gray-hayrd discretion' in *Withers Motto* (A5<sup>v</sup>), 'dastard reason' in *Britains Remembrancer* (85<sup>v</sup>) – are scornfully dismissed. *Remembrancer* also returns to the 'false friends' theme that runs throughout Wither's earlier poems with renewed intensity; his friends have treated him like Job, Wither complains,

<sup>59</sup> Grundy, *Spenserian Poets*, 143.

<sup>60</sup> 'Fido: an Epistle to Fidelia', ll. 223-28; cited from *The Poems of William Browne of Tavistock*, ed. Gordon Goodwin, 2 vols (London, 1894), 2.244-45. This poem remained in manuscript.



which suggests they urged him, as Friend does Hoccleve, to take some responsibility for his own misfortunes.<sup>61</sup> Another passage attacks those whose poetry is ‘trimd and trickt, / With curious dressings, from old Authers pickt’; mere ‘Stepfathers to their Poemes’, who ‘assume / Some Ostridge feathers, or the Peacockes plume / To strut withall’ (137<sup>r</sup>, 138<sup>v</sup>, 137<sup>v</sup>). Disguising himself in Hocclevean plumage was not in Wither’s nature.

Yet there may also have been a sense in which Wither followed Browne’s advice. It was during his 1614 imprisonment that he embarked on the psalm translations that would take him a decade to complete.<sup>62</sup> The poem that inaugurates this project is *Shepherds Hunting* I. This is also the closest of Wither’s multiple imitations of the ‘Jonathas’ eclogue: not only does Willy/Browne console Roget/Wither on his imprisonment, but Roget also performs for his benefit an inset “song” with religious overtones. In this case, however, rather than placing his song in the tradition of the English Tityrus Chaucer, Roget attributes it to the biblical shepherd-king David (B8<sup>v</sup>). This suggests it should be read as a psalm, though I have been unable to identify an original on which it might be based; it may be Wither’s own composition in psalm style, in which case the opening verse’s ‘unto honey turn this gall’ (B6<sup>f</sup>) might seem particularly significant. These words appear to reverse the lines that introduce ‘Jonathas’ in *The Series*: ‘he / That hony first yaf . . . now yeveth galle’ (‘Jonathas’, ll. 40-41), strengthening the likelihood that Wither was familiar with Browne’s Hoccleve manuscripts. The reversal distances Wither’s poem from Browne’s, but it also marks the depth of his engagement with it.

Satire and religion had close connections in this period,<sup>63</sup> and Wither was not the first English satirist to experiment with psalms. His predecessors included Thomas Wyatt and Joseph Hall, the latter of whom noted how his work on the psalms ‘seemed well to accord with the former exercises of my youth’, the satires of *Virgidemiarum* (1597-99). In the aftermath of the Bishops’ Ban, Nicholas Breton had explicitly recommended such a transition: ‘Let us then leave our biting kinde of verses’ he urged, and instead ‘Expresse our passions as the Psalmist did’.<sup>64</sup> In *A Preparation to the Psalter* (1619) Wither made this continuity apparent, hoping that his psalms would satisfy anyone hoping ‘to see *Abuses whipt* againe’. Later in the same work, a notably oblique explanation of why he had not in fact produced a more obvious sequel to *Abuses* carried the marginal heading *Difficile est satyrem non scribere*, suggesting that his irrepressible satiric impulse had been forced to find a new kind of outlet (A2<sup>v</sup>, 2-3). The psalms’ royal patent and implicit Arminianism has led scholars to read them as evidence of Wither’s having been ‘bought off’,<sup>65</sup> but the extent to which they represented a continuation of satire by other means should not be overlooked.

In this sense the psalms can be viewed as Wither’s own version of ‘some other kind of lore’. Like ‘Jonathas’, they were parables, with a ‘double sense’ that needed to be ‘unridled’, and there was also a sense in which they could be described as ‘borrowed wit’. But the difference was that this wit was not borrowed from ‘the imperfect inventions of men’, but ‘dictated unto us by His holy spirit’; the psalms were ‘coales from the altars of the Lord’, rather than ‘the forges of human rhetorick’.<sup>66</sup> As *Britains Remembrancer* shows, Wither came to understand his own poetry as having this same origin, ‘infused’ by God in contrast to the ‘counterfeit’ efforts of ‘Artificiall

<sup>61</sup> *Britains Remembrancer*, 90<sup>v</sup>-92<sup>r</sup>; see also *Abuses Stript*, C2<sup>r</sup>, E3<sup>r</sup>; *A Satyre*, F6<sup>r</sup>; *Fidelia*, A3<sup>v</sup>; *Wither’s Motto*, E7<sup>v</sup>-E8<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> In 1621 he had been working on them for the length of an apprenticeship, usually seven years, and they were finished around the death of James I in 1625. See Wither, *The Songs of the Old Testament*, A4<sup>r</sup>; Wither, *The Psalmes of David* (1632), A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> Kernan, *Cankered Muse*, 123-26; Charles Cathcart, ‘Guilpin and the Godly Satyre’, *Review of English Studies*, NS, 62 (2011), 64-79; Glenn Clark, ‘Zeal or Vengeance?: Anger, Performance, and Ministerial Figures in Marston and Shakespeare’, *Religion and Literature* 42 (2010), 1-26.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph Hall, *Holy Observations . . . Also Some Fewe of Davids Psalmes Metaphrased* (1607), G4<sup>r</sup>; Nicholas Breton, *No Whippinge, nor Trippinge: but a Kinde Friendly Snippinge* (1601), C7<sup>v</sup>, C8<sup>v</sup>. On Wyatt’s verse epistles as satires, see Catherine Bates, “‘A Mild Admonisher’: Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sixteenth-Century Satire”, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 56 (1993), 243-58.

<sup>65</sup> Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, 216-17; see also Clegg, *Press Censorship*, 45-50.

<sup>66</sup> Wither, *A Preparation to the Psalter*, 104 (and see 102-6), 5, 131; Wither, *The Songs of the Old Testament* (1621), 68-69.

poets' (138<sup>v</sup>). The most fascinating passages of this extraordinary poem are those which describe Wither's struggle to decide whether the angelic visitations he experiences are real, or the products of a 'melancholy' brought on by his plague-ridden surroundings (142<sup>r</sup>-158<sup>v</sup>); and perhaps also, readers might deduce, by the accumulated stresses of his previous spells of imprisonment.<sup>67</sup> Wither's psalm translations had helped him to write himself into this new prophetic identity. Their emergence in dialogue with Browne's poem suggests that identity to have been rooted in the political abuses and disturbed thoughts that Wither had suffered in 1614.

But the galling image of the mad satirist that Wither's first works had helped to perpetuate was not easily laid to rest. In 1621 another author presented a 'satyricall' work aimed at the world's disordered passions but also, he claimed, driven by his own. Like *Abuses*, this work established a Christian framework at the outset by tracing the origin of such 'strange distemperatures' to the Fall. Its author defended his plain style, likened potential critics to galled horses, and characterised his satire as 'a dreame . . . a raving fit' from which he had to recall himself to mind.<sup>68</sup> There were earlier sources for most of these features, but *Abuses* and the Spenserian poems which followed it had brought them to the forefront. The author in question was Robert Burton, on whom George Wither's influence, which critics have begun to acknowledge, may have been greater than has been thought.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> See, e.g., 109<sup>v</sup>, 143<sup>v</sup>-144<sup>r</sup>, 286<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy . . . With a Satyricall Preface* (1621), 14-15, 36, 69-71 (preface); 1-2 (main text). Burton's description of his style – 'loose, plaine, rude . . . I call a spade a spade' – was added to the second edition: *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 2nd edn (1624), 9 (preface).

<sup>69</sup> Gowland, *Renaissance Melancholy*, 221, 261, 277n, 281.